Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is this project being funded?

The Gravina Access Project is one of 16 high priority projects funded in Alaska by the federal transportation bill "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" (TEA-21). TEA-21 allocates $20,443,000 toward "Constructing a bridge joining the Island of Gravina to the Community of Ketchikan on Revilla Island." This federal funding must be matched at 20%. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has committed to matching the initial stages of project development, through environmental clearance and engineering design. The 20% match needed for the much larger right-of-way and construction costs of the project has not been identified (see question 2).

2. Certainly improved access will cost more than $20 million, where will all the rest of the money come from?

Building a bridge, ferry, tube, or tunnel, depending on the approved design and location, has previously been estimated to cost between $80 and $100 million. Full funding for construction, has not been identified. If any alternative is going to be constructed, like most of Alaska's capital transportation expenditures, the federal government will probably fund the bulk of it. An important question is who will fund the match. The DOT&PF will sponsor a study to explore funding strategies for providing the matching funds.

3. Why are we studying ferries, tubes, and tunnels if federal legislation calls for building a bridge? Is there funding for these alternatives?

Despite the fact that TEA-21 specifies building a "bridge," the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that all "reasonable" alternatives meeting the purpose and need for the project be examined. For this reason, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and DOT&PF are examining a range of alternatives (*including the no build alternative*) and conducting preliminary engineering and other studies to determine which build alternatives are "reasonable." Full funding for construction of any alternative has not been identified. Should a build alternative be chosen for construction, construction funding will have to be pursued.

Visit the project website (www.gravina-access.com) for more frequently asked questions.

Events and Deadlines on the Horizon

- The Ketchikan Gateway Borough and its consultant recently completed the "Ketchikan 2020 Scoping Summary Report," and the Planning Commission is taking public comment until February 29th. The report outlines issues, goals, and objectives for updating the Coastal Zone Management Plan, the Gravina Island Development Plan, and the scope of work for the Wetlands Development Plan.

- To give you more time to comment on options presented at the January 27th public meeting, we've extended the deadline to March 17th. All comments received by March 17th will assist our team in refining and narrowing the options. Feel free to review and comment on all the options and additional information on line at www.gravina-access.com, or direct your comments to any of the team members listed below.

- The Gravina Access Project team will hold another public meeting this spring to get your feedback as we narrow the list of options.

Please keep those comments coming by mail, fax, phone, or e-mail. You can also stop by the Ketchikan project office or log on to the project website at www.gravina-access.com.

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Gravina Access Project

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Gravina Access Project Public Meeting Unveils Access Options

Ferry routes. High bridges. Low bridges. Moveable span bridges. Sunken tubes. Tunnel/tube/bridge combinations.
At the January 27th public meeting held at the Ted Ferry Civic Center, the project team unveiled 12 concepts for better connecting the City of Ketchikan and Revillagigedo Island with Ketchikan International Airport and Gravina Island. These concepts reflect public and agency input (input including expectations, cautions, and concerns), knowledge gained from previous studies, and engineering considerations. The following list highlights the assumptions guiding the development of these concepts.

- High bridges must be tall enough and their bridge spans wide enough to allow two-way cruise-ship traffic to pass. Low bridges must be tall enough and their bridge spans wide enough to allow two-way Columbia-class ferry traffic to pass. Tunnels must be aligned in Tongass Narrows where two-way cruise ship traffic can pass over the tunnel.

- The bridge options can penetrate the airport's regulated airspace provided they remain outside the approaches.

- All alternatives begin on the road system on Revilla and terminate at the airport on Gravina.

- The best way to improve ferry service is with an additional ferry on a new alignment.

Look inside for details on the 12 crossing concepts.

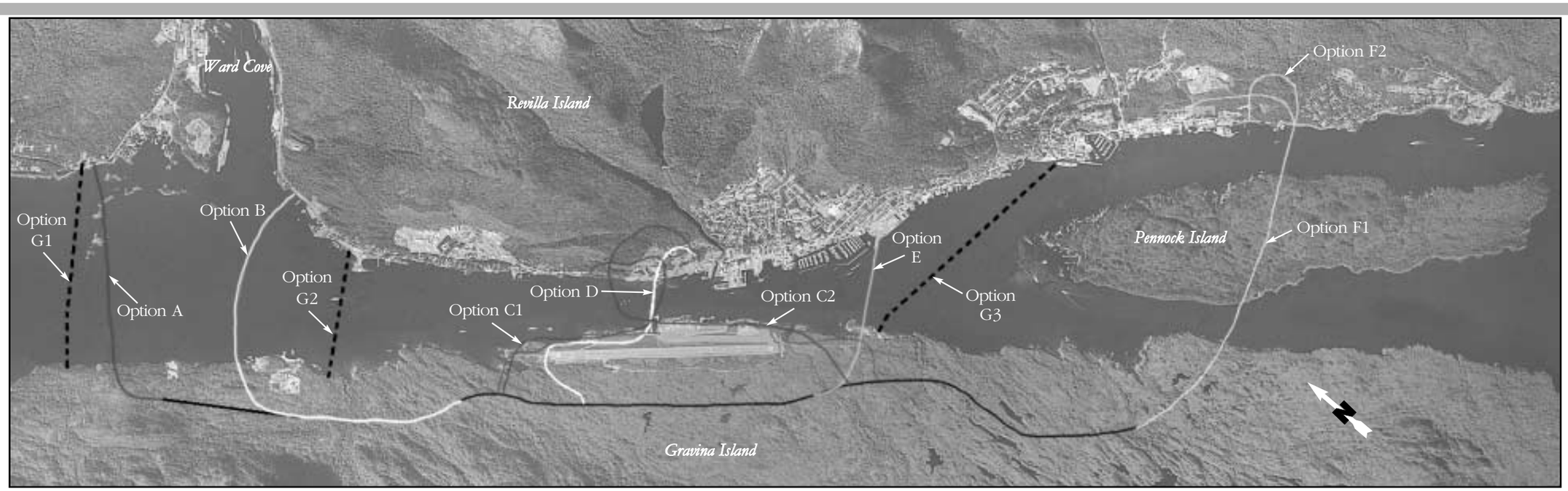
Over the next few months and with your feedback, the project team will continue to refine and evaluate these options. The best options will be carried forward for more detailed evaluation in the project's environmental impact statement (EIS), a document required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Issues team members and others will consider include the following:

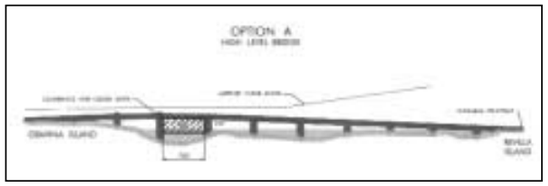
- travel time
- floatplane operations
- navigation impacts
- aviation clearances
- traffic impacts
- operation and maintenance costs
- cruise ship rerouting
- oversize vehicle limitation
- hazardous materials limitations
- fire safety
- boarding delays
- private property
- wetlands congestion
- visual impacts
- historical and cultural resources
- cumulative impacts
- intertidal and subtidal impacts

New Items Posted on the Web
www.gravina-access.com

- Plan view and cross sections of options
- Additional project photos
- More technical reports
- Updated frequently asked questions

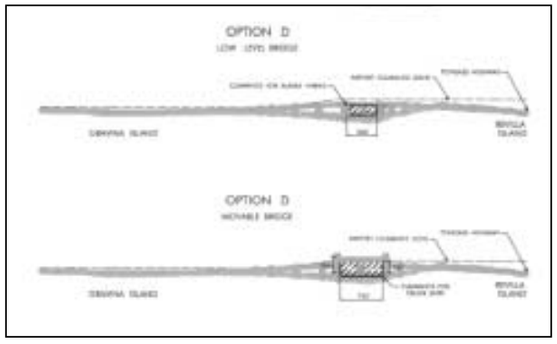
A Gateway to the Future
Gravina Access Project





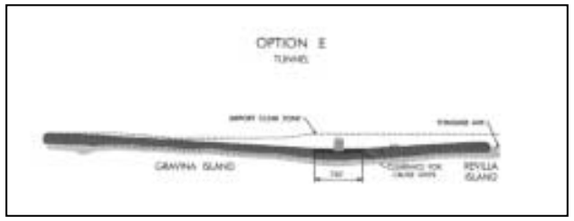
High Level Bridge (Options A, B, C1, C2, F1*)
The project team developed five high-level bridge options. Three of these options lie outside of the airport navigational height-restricted area (A, B and F1-east channel), while the others are near the airport. A high-level bridge would have a marine navigational opening 750 feet wide and 210 feet high (above mean higher high water) to allow two cruise ships to pass under the bridge safely. The draft for marine vessels at the opening would be 40 feet deep.

* Option F1 is a combination of a low level bridge and a high level bridge.



Low Level or Moveable Bridge (Options D, F1*F2*)
The low level bridge on Options D and west channel of F1 and F2 provide for Columbia class vessels to pass with clearances of 120 feet high and 500 feet wide, and a draft of 40 feet. Cruise ships would be unable to pass under the low-level bridge of Option D and would have to go around Gravina Island. A moveable bridge, however, would provide an opening large enough for cruise ships to pass, but would stop traffic while the bridge was open.

* Option F1 is a combination of a low level bridge (west channel) and a high level bridge (east channel). Option F2 is a combination of a low level bridge (west channel) and a tunnel (east channel).



Tube/Tunnel (Option E, F2*)
Option E would start near the intersection of Tongass and Jefferson roads and it would consist of a combination of a tunnel and sunken tube. The tunnel would provide for a maximum draft of 40 feet below mean lower low water in the main channel. The tunnel would accommodate normal highway vehicles.

* Option F2 is a combination of a low level bridge (west channel) and a tunnel (east channel).

Ferry Alternatives (Options G1, G2, G3)
Options G1, G2 and G3 are additional ferry routes. To effectively increase capacity at the current location requires additional terminals and ferries. Because additional terminals and ferries would be needed, crossing at other locations would increase the options for travel and decrease waterway congestion at the airport.

Technical Studies Are Underway

With access concepts drawn on paper, the project team moves into a new level of evaluation. Here's a look at our ongoing work.

Ketchikan Land Use Inventory
Team planners are identifying current development trends and land use plans and policies to establish a baseline for projecting the need for the project and anticipated impacts of potential crossing locations.

Preliminary Engineering
The engineering team will continue to narrow the range of locations and types of access options in detailed preliminary engineering.

Historic and Archaeological Resources
Team planners are evaluating historic and archaeological resources in the project area.

Wetlands Classification and Assessment
Team scientists are classifying, assessing, and mapping wetlands and wetland values in the project area. This work includes literature reviews, aerial photo interpretation, and interviews with agencies and other knowledgeable people.

Marine Environment Assessment
Biologists are investigating the shoreline and underwater environment and detailing the location and abundance of eelgrass, seabirds, and marine mammals in the project area.

Economic Assessment
Team economists are analyzing historic and existing economic conditions in the borough and surrounding communities and developing low, medium, and high scenarios to help determine demand estimates for the project.